EDU 221

Spring 2013

Curriculum Instruction Assessment (CIA)

FIAE Reflections – Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, of *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*, the author Rick Wormeli focuses on the issue of assessment. Wormeli begins by discussing one of the key factors that affect a teacher’s ability to effectively assess students: paradigms. Wormeli argues that if we are going to teach students, we must take into account ideas, including misconceptions, about our content area that they bring with them when they enter our classrooms. The author recommends using pre-assessments in order to help the teacher develop an understanding of where each student is at from the start. Pre-assessment is the first part of a three-part assessment process advocated in this chapter. The second step is ongoing formative assessments in order to gage what the student has mastered, and what areas they still need to develop. The last step is a summative assessment given to students at the end of the unit, and should “reflect most, if not all of the essential and enduring knowledge” (Wormeli, p27).

I really loved the idea of doing a pre-assessment. During my time as a mentor at Mt. Blue I worked with a student on his multi-step equations assignment. While he was working on the problem (5x + 2 = 12), he successfully subtracted a two, and rewrote the problem which now read 5x = 10. In order to get the “x” alone he divided by five and stated confidently that this “cancelled” the five. This set an alarm bell off and I asked him what he meant by cancelled. He then proceed to explain that it meant the “five goes away.” Not being satisfied, I asked “what do you mean by that?” He then showed me an additive inverse as proof of his point. Straight away I realized this student has a completely different idea of what was really going on. Although he could solve for “x,” he had an incorrect notion of what it meant to “cancel” in this instance. This experience, and the author’s comments, highlight, for me, the need for pre-assessments. It is most definitely something I intend do, along with formative and summative assessments, in my future classroom.